

383059 - She earned money by deceiving advertisers and invested it in a project

the question

I acquired money through the Internet by placing advertisers' products on my website. For example, I go to the website of one of the advertisers and open an account; or I download an advertiser's app and do something required by the advertiser; or an advertiser pays me for everyone who does something, and I pay a user. I tricked some advertisers by carrying out their instructions myself, and I did that repeatedly, then I took that money and invested it, and did some halal business with it and made a considerable profit, and that project is still ongoing until now. My question is: What is the ruling on the money that I acquired in the beginning? What is the ruling on the profits that resulted from the business I did and am still doing, because I have no other way of earning money? If I have to get rid of half of the profits, is the remaining money halal for me so that I can invest it in the same project and receive the profits in full?

Detailed answer

Firstly:

It is not permissible to use tricks and deceit to earn money from the advertisers. The money that result from that is haram wealth, because it was taken unlawfully. The Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Plotting and scheming lead to Hell." Al-Bayhaqi narrated it in *Shu'ab al-Iman* and al-Albani classed it as sahih in *Sahih al-Jami'* (6725). Al-Bukhari narrated it in his *Sahih*, in a mu'allaq report, as: "Deceit leads to Hell; whoever does an action that is not in accordance with our matter, it will be rejected."

Secondly:

You must return the money that you acquired by means of deceit to its owners. If it is not possible to find them, you must give it in charity on their behalf.

Ibn al-Qayyim said: If what was taken was taken without the consent of its owner, and he did not receive compensation for it, he must return it to him. If it is not possible to return it, he should pay off a debt that he knows he owes to other people. If that is not possible, then he should return it to his heirs. If that is not possible, he should give it in charity on his behalf.

If the one to whom it is owed chose to take reward in compensation on the Day of Resurrection, he may do that. If he insists on taking some of the good deeds of the one who took his wealth, he will take from him as much of his good deeds as is equivalent to the wealth that was taken from him, and the reward of charity will go to the one who gave it, as is soundly narrated from the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them)."*(Zad al-Ma'ad 5/690)*.

Thirdly:

If you invested money that was acquired by haram means and you earned a profit from that, then in addition to repenting you must give to the owner of the wealth his share of the profit, in accordance with the going rate for profit-sharing, in addition to his original money.

If the money was given to someone to do business with it on the basis of profit-sharing, and the going rate for the one who did business with it is fifty percent of the profit, or forty percent of the profit, and the owners of the capital take fifty percent or sixty percent, then the owners of the wealth (the capital) in this scenario should be given fifty percent or sixty percent, according to what is customary in the case of profit-sharing in your country.

Whoever earns profit with this money, by investing it in trade and the like, it was said that the profit belongs to the owner of the capital; or that it belongs to the one who took it and traded with it, if he traded in his own name; or that they should both give it in charity, because it is profit that was earned in a wrong way; or that it should be divided between him and the owner of the capital, like any profit-sharing investment, as 'Umar ibn Khattab did with the wealth that Abu Musa al-Ash'ari lent to his two sons, to the exclusion of the other troops. This is the most appropriate and fair view."*(Majmu' al-Fatawa 30/29)*.

And he [Ibn Taymiyah] said: As for the capital that is taken by force, if the one who took it by force invested it and acquired profit, there are different scholarly views: Does the profit belong

only to the owner of the capital? Or should they give it in charity? Or should it be shared between them as it would be if he did that by way of a profit-sharing business, musaqah (when trees are given to someone to tend and irrigate in return for a share of the harvest), or muzara'ah (where one person supplies land and another cultivates it), or when one person gives an animal to a worker who will look after it in return for some of its milk and offspring, or he gives the worker a set fee like that of one who does similar work, or whatever is in accordance with then established custom, like what 'Umar ibn al-Khattab did? That is what is fair, because this profit was earned by means of the capital of one of them and the work of the other. Therefore neither of them should keep the profit to himself, and they do not have to give it in charity, because it rightfully belongs to both of them and not to anyone else. Rather the profit should be shared between them, as if they were partners in a profit-sharing business."(*Majmu' al-Fatawa* 30/322).

Based on that, what you must do is add this percentage of the profit to the capital that you acquired unlawfully, and return all of that to its owners, or give it in charity on their behalf if you are unable to find them. Thus the rest of your wealth and its profits will become halal for you.

And Allah knows best.